

BX
9211
.S674
T44
1676



EX

9211

.S674

744

1-76

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED

ON SUNDAY, JULY 16th, 1876,

IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

SPRINGFIELD, N. J.,

BY

REV. HENRY W. TELLER,

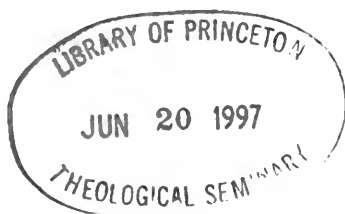
Pastor of the Church.



NEWARK, N. J.:

PRINTED BY WARD & TICHENOR, 832 & 834 BROAD ST.

1876.



SPRINGFIELD, August 1st, 1876.

REV. H. W. TELLER:

DEAR SIR:

As many of the members of our Church and Congregation have expressed a desire for a copy of the Historical Sermon preached on the morning of July 16th, we would request you to furnish us a copy of the same for publication.

Yours, respectfully,

A. D. TRAPHAGEN,
SAM'L C. SMITH,
JACOB FRENCH,
R. M. BABBIT,
O. H. SOMMERS,
WM. S. SMITH,
H. M. GRAVES.

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.

“And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years.”—GENESIS xlvii: 8, 9.

IT is the recommendation of General Assembly that during this year sometime the pastor of each church should preach to his people a historical sermon; not necessarily a “Centennial” sermon—for only a comparatively limited number of the churches would be able to do that, as the great majority are not yet of age—but a sermon that shall gather up the more important facts of its history, that they may be preserved for future generations.

The wisdom of such a course will be seen at a single glance. We are a young Nation yet, and the means of obtaining an accurate history is within our reach. Many interesting incidents and events—running back to the very beginning of our national life—may now be easily collected and as easily preserved; and we owe it to the generations that shall follow after us, that these things—which belong to all ages—shall be so garnered and guarded as not to be lost.

What would *we* not now give for an accurate and minute history of the *ancient* kingdoms of the earth, such as we would now have, if early in the course of their existence, they had each adopted a plan like that proposed by our

General Assembly? The nearest approach we have to it, is the Bible history of the Israelites; and how full of interest is that to every intelligent and appreciative reader. And will not the people who will be living two thousand years from now, have at least an equal desire to know all that they may of the events transpiring in the present, and shaping the destiny of this great Republic?

It is well, then, that each church, and each town, should lay hold upon the opportunity while it may, to rescue its past from oblivion. And not alone for the benefit of future generations should this be done, but also for the instruction of the present. That we may see in our path the finger of GOD, and realize in some measure the goodness and mercy that have followed us; and hear, over all the circumstances of the rolling years, the voices of his providence calling us to a higher national and individual life.

In preparing a historical discourse for our own church and township, we have chosen the text we have for two reasons: First, because of the general appropriateness of the question, "How *old* art thou?" In this Centennial year, (which seems to have been set apart by common consent to the work of retrospection,) all questions, and all forms of salutation, are merged in this: "How old art thou?"

The old folks are having things all their own way this year. Old books, old manuscripts, old legends, are in great demand. Nothing is valued very highly unless it can show some *age*. Musty records are hunted up, moss-covered monuments are carefully studied, old roads are gone over, old houses are visited, the roots of ancient family trees are dug after, and men are inquiring of everything that has a venerable appearance, "How old art thou?"

In the second place, the text is chosen for the *peculiar* appropriateness of the answer; for it is just one hundred and thirty years since the first pastor was installed here, over the people of GOD, and he was settled immediately after the church was organized.

So, as they who are interested in the old church ask, in the language of the text, "How old art thou?" we can imagine it, as also in the language of the text, replying, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years."

And what a record of good and evil, of human love and hate, of passionate prayers and maledictions, of alternating hopes and fears, of solemn consecrations and shameful back-slidings, of glorious triumphs and inglorious defeats, of homes built up and filled up and then deserted, of darkened birth and death chambers, of fair forms wreathed with orange blossoms and then covered with crape, of graves opened and flowers above them kept fresh and fragrant for a season by our tears and then neglected; what a record of such things, I say, (strangely varied and brought close together by the rush of years,) is contained in that long stretch of time, "a hundred and thirty years."

A history of the church is, in one respect, a history of the town, and a history of the town is a history of the country. We can scarcely go over the whole ground in a single discourse, but a few general facts are essential to an intelligent review of our local history.

The precise date of the first settlement within the limits of New Jersey is not positively known. We know, however, that there was a Dutch trading post at Bergen as early as the year 1622.

The settlement at Elizabethtown, made in 1664 by emi-

grants from Long Island, was really, it is supposed, the beginning of colonization in this State.

In that same year the English King granted to the Duke of York, (as a slight token of respect, or for some other equally commendable reason,) the whole State of New Jersey and a part of New York, and the Duke sold the State of New Jersey to a brace of English worthies called Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. Which transaction, on the part of his kingship and dukeship, had about as much right and religion in it as though I should give to one of my elders the little Island of Great Britain, and he should sell it in two slices to two members of this congregation.

Shortly after the settlement at Elizabethtown, Newark, Middletown and Shrewsbury were founded.

We would say right here, that it does not become us to boast too loudly of our gray hairs, either as a town or a church, for there are a good many in the State more venerable than we. As a church, we have a near neighbor that over a year ago had occasion to rejoice in its two hundredth anniversary; I refer to the church at Woodbridge. The oldest church in the State—the First Church of Elizabeth, of which Rev. Dr. Kempshall is now pastor—is two hundred and ten years old. The town of Springfield was not settled until fifty-three years after the settlement of Elizabethtown. The State had at the time something over forty thousand inhabitants. The Briant family was the first to settle in this section of the country, in 1717, and the Stites family must have followed immediately after. For awhile there were but three families, it is said, between Morristown and Elizabethtown. Imagine, if you can, this extensive tract of country, now so thickly populated and seamed with railroads, and dotted over with villages and

covered with great mills and factories; think of it, with only three houses in it. These broad fields uncultivated, these hills covered with dense forests, these streams hidden by the wild growths of nature, and only one road, more nearly resembling a modern cart-path at that, threading its uncertain way from one town to the other.

In 1738 the village of Springfield consisted of three houses, occupied by Thomas Denman, and the Van Winkle and Whitehead families. But from this time the number of inhabitants, in the village and adjoining country, must have increased rapidly.

It was in those early days that the people in all these regions round about Elizabethtown, having but the one church to worship in, used to *walk* to it from Rahway, Westfield, Springfield and Connecticut Farms. Whether they were in the habit of going to and fro to both services, or of attending as regularly on rainy Sundays as clear ones, we have no means at this late day of determining. The church in Springfield, (which is the only child of the Connecticut Farms Church, and one of the grand-children of the First Church of Elizabeth,) was organized twenty-nine years after the first settlement here. It belonged originally to the Presbytery of New York. A house of worship was immediately built, and was situated about half way between the present parsonage and the Millburn depot. It was very near, if not on exactly the same spot, where Mr. John Meeker's store is now standing. There was also a graveyard there. Tradition says the church was built of logs. It was completed, and the first pastor, Rev. Timothy Syms,* was installed in 1746, just one hundred and thirty years

* I give the name as I find it in a deed given in 1751, which is unquestionably correct; though elsewhere it is written "Symmes."

ago. Mr. Syms had charge of this church, in connection with the one at New Providence. He was grandfather, we are told, of one Capt. Syms, who had a novel theory of the structure of the earth, that is said to have excited a good deal of attention at the time. You will have to look pretty sharply, though, in the Cyclopædias of the day to find out just what his peculiar notion was; for there have been so many novel theories invented since, that his is almost lost in the multitude. He believed that the earth was hollow, and that the inside was inhabited, or might be, just as well as the outside. The entrance to this inner world was at the poles. He proved the sincerity of his views by petitioning Congress for means to fit out an expedition to test the truth of them, but Congress very wisely concluded not to grant his request, as there was yet plenty of room on the outside of the globe for all the people. The only merit his theory possessed was originality, and the only thing that saved both him and it from oblivion, was that he was a kind of pioneer in that species of novelty.

Mr. Syms, the grandfather of the captain—and famous chiefly for being his grandfather—was pastor of the church for four years, until 1750, after which there was a vacancy for thirteen years. While he was pastor, and the first church was still standing, there was given to the congregation a tract of land consisting of one hundred acres, in the following way and upon the following conditions. I quote from the original deed as it was given by James Alexander, who was one of the then Lord Proprietors of the Eastern Division of New Jersey, and who was appointed by his associates for the purpose. The deed bears date March 29th, 1751, and reads as follows: "And as to the other one hundred acres of the premises," (one hundred acres

were first deeded to Rev. Timothy Sims as his own private property,) "the same is to be to the sole and only proper use, benefit and behoof of the said Timothy Symms and Peter Dickinson, their heirs and assigns, rendering therefore yearly, *one pint of spring water, when demanded on the premises.* Provided, always, and it is hereby declared, that the last hundred acres is to be held by the said Timothy Symms and Peter Dickinson, and the survivors of them and their heirs, in *trust*; to be a glebe for the use of the minister of the said parish of Springfield—for the time being—forever: and never to be sold, or disposed of, to any other use. But the said trustees and their assigns shall and may, from time to time, at the request of the minister and the vestry of the said church of Springfield—for the time being—grant and convey the same to such *other* trustees as they shall from time to time name, for the use and purpose aforesaid, *and no other.*"

For years the chief value of this land was in the forests that covered it, which enabled the church to add to their other inducements in seeking a pastor, an abundance of firewood.

Whatever became of the first log house of worship, I have not been able to learn. There is no record of it, save the single fact—stated in an old manuscript—that it was built. It might have been destroyed, or very likely it was abandoned as soon as they were able to put up another. We know very well that the Puritan principles of our forefathers would not suffer them to worship very long in a temple of logs, while they dwelt in their ceiled houses.

The second meeting-house was built in 1761, fifteen years after the first, upon the spot where the present one is standing, and stood here for nineteen years.

In 1763, Rev. Mr. Ker was installed, and was here two years, when there was a vacancy of nine years. There is no account of any of the events transpiring in all that time, except that the first parsonage was raised Aug. 22d, 1764. When the record is again resumed, it is at a period immediately preceding the Revolution, for this second church was the centre of revolutionary interest for the town of Springfield.

In November, 1778, it was so taken up with public stores, that the congregation abandoned it for the time being, and fitted up the garret of the old parsonage as a temporary place of worship. Thus was the building itself dedicated to the country's service, in the name of the God of Battles. How small and mean the spirit of revenge that afterward burned it to the ground, and yet a spirit worthy the tyranny that employed mercenary troops and savages to carry on an unholy war.

On October 12th, 1773, a call was given Rev. John Close. He was offered \$250, besides the parsonage and firewood, but for some reason kept secret from the ages, the offer was not accepted. Perhaps he was a young man, and modest, and the offer seemed too great. During this year, Rev. Mr. Caldwell—who was called the “high priest of the Revolution,” whose wife was shot at Connecticut Farms shortly before the battle of Springfield, and who was himself murdered the year following at the Elizabethtown ferry—preached several times to this congregation.

On October 10th, 1774, Rev. Jacob Vⁿ Artsdalen,* whose remains are resting in our cemetery, came before the people and “preached a lecture,”—as the record has it—which

* I give the name as I find it in his own handwriting. It was afterwards written Vanarsdalen, and still later Vanarsdale, or Vanarsdal.

was so well received that it secured him a call at once. He came in December of the same year, upon a salary of \$250, together with the use of the parsonage and the inevitable firewood, which was to be drawn to his door. The salary was afterward increased to \$300.

The meagre support received from the churches had a tendency to make some of the pastors pretty sharp financiers. As an illustration of this, there is still in existence a fifteen hundred dollar bond, given by the Trustees of the church to Mr. Vⁿ Artsdalen upon the condition, that if the Trustees paid "promptly every year," in "quarterly payments," their pastor's salary, and "well and truly" provided "a sufficient quantity of firewood," and kept him "in quiet and peaceable possession" of the parsonage, "with all the appurtenances," and kept "the same in good repair," according "to the true intent and meaning" of their agreement, then the obligation of the bond was "to be void, otherwise to remain in full force and virtue."

It does not prove the pastor avaricious, but only that his salary was so small that he could not afford to run any risks. He evidently did not consider their word *quite* as good as their bond. Let it be said, however, to the credit of the church, that every obligation was promptly met, and in due time the bond was canceled. Mr. Vⁿ Artsdalen served the church faithfully for twenty-seven years, and resigned his charge only when failing health compelled him to do so. One evidence of the people's affection for him is the fact that in May, 1778, they gave him a vacation of six months, and continued his salary. You must remember that that was not as much the practice then as it is now. It was something more than mere conventional courtesy, or a forced concession to a growing custom, that led a people in those

days to grant their pastor a leave of absence. He was ardently devoted to his country, and to the work of the Master. The time of his ministry included the whole period of the Revolution. He saw his church, together with many of the homes of his parishioners, reduced to ashes: but nothing daunted he continued his work. He gathered his scattered flock together again, as a father would gather his children, and releasing them from their bonded obligation to pay him a stipulated salary, he hired to them from year to year, accepting just what they could afford to give. After the burning of the church we next find him preaching to his heroic band of christian patriots, in the old parsonage barn. Why they did not return to the garret we are not informed, but very likely the congregation had by this time outgrown it; or, what is equally probable, they might have thought that as they were now driven out of their church indefinitely, the barn would be more convenient. They certainly had the grace and the good sense to make the best of the situation. They were "cast down, but not discouraged." As soon as they fixed upon their place of worship they agreed to ceil it up to the plate and gable end beams. In the following year they had put in galleries, with the foremost seats on the right-hand side of the pulpit reserved for the singers. In this rudely fitted up temple they must have worshiped ten years.

September 25th, 1786, four years after the barn was fairly fitted up, the church was incorporated under the name of the "First Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Springfield." The seal of the church—a Dove with an Olive branch—was not adopted until December, 1792. In 1786 they began to talk of building for themselves the third house of worship. Four years, at least, was spent in work-

ing up an interest and laying plans, and devising means, before the building was fairly begun. It was first agreed to build of brick and stone. A burnt child dreads the fire; they wanted something that wouldn't burn. But the first plan was given up as too expensive for their limited means. Twelve months after they concluded upon cedar shingles, and finally, in 1791, the frame went up. It was a time of general rejoicing to both pastor and people. Work and material were contributed by the members of the congregation as they were able. Men came bringing their tools and the best timber their farms could furnish; booths were erected on the ground, where the women prepared meals for the volunteer workmen; contributions were solicited from the churches of the Presbytery of New York; the bell was contributed by Mr. Samuel Tyler, and thus the work went forward to completion, and grand old Jacob Vⁿ Artsdalen was the first to preach in the new church as he had been the last to preach in the old.

Some of you will remember this church as it was originally, just as it came from the hands of that earnest band of workmen. You have in your memory an unfading picture of its old fashioned, straight-backed pews; its broad centre aisle, its middle seats that had no partition running through them, as these have; its narrow side aisles which made a passage for the benefit of the wall seats only, as they only opened into them, the centre seats being closed up at the ends nearest the walls. You have not forgotten, either, the quaint old circular pulpit, mounted upon a high column like a huge barrel, elevated so as to overlook the body of the church, and at the same time sweep the galleries. And you will remember also, the great sounding board, back of the pulpit and di-

rectly over the preacher's head, that caused you always to think of the wings that overshadowed the Mercy Seat, though it never bore to them the slightest resemblance. Such was the primitive glory of this latter house, as some of you well remember. In it Mr. Vⁿ Artsdalen preached as long as he was able, and finally when he could come no longer, he was brought one day by loving hands that his sorrowing people might look upon his face once more, and for the last time.

On the first of May, 1800, he stopped preaching, but he remained in the parsonage, and his salary was continued. On May 1st, 1801, he was dismissed and one year's further salary was voted to him. In 1803 he entered into his rest.

It is recorded that near the close of his ministry Rev. Jonathan Elmer preached for him; and as he was without charge he requested a contribution, which was accordingly taken up and amounted to eight dollars and some cents. It may seem to us an unimportant item to be made a matter of record, but we must acknowledge that he was a better judge as to its importance. In March, 1801, it was decided to hire Rev. Gershom Williams for one year from May 1st. In October of the same year a call was given him, which he seems to have had under consideration for a long while, for the first Communion after his acceptance of it was on the 23d of May, 1802. His ministry here was marked by the most powerful revival that ever occurred in this church. He has left on record, in his own hand-writing, two bits of personal experience that are as windows looking into the heart of the man, and disclosing something of the spiritual moods to which he appears to have been subject. Like the Psalmist David he was susceptible of the highest exaltation and deepest depression. On September 9th, 1804, he went

home from the Lord's Supper and wrote, in the bitterness of his spirit, "Not one new member admitted. O melancholy instance, once repeated since my public ministry began. May this evidence of barrenness humble me, and lead all the Disciples to ardent prayer." Four years the leanness continued, and there were but nine added to the church in the whole time. Then there was an addition of thirty at one Communion, and at another, in the same year, of fifteen. After that there was no general work of grace until 1814. On May 8th of that year the faithful pastor goes from the breaking of bread to his study in a far different mood from that which carried him there on that dark September day, ten years before. The fruit is at length ripening and dropping into his hands, and his heart is full. He sits down and writes a long list of names—every one of which he counts as a star—and then under the list he writes, "The above one hundred and one names were all added to the church in one day—of whom forty-one then received baptism. Wondrous day of the LORD! never to be forgotten."

It was indeed a wondrous day for the Springfield church. These galleries were packed, until it was feared they would break down; these seats and aisles were crowded to overflowing with penitent saints and sinners, that had been alike quickened into new life. Do you think that pastor's joy could have been measured that day by any earthly measurement? There are many treasures in this world that men reckon of priceless value, and count with pride and delight, but there are none like the souls that are saved for Jesus. We know nothing of the fullness of joy until we sit down to number the saved through our instrumentality, who shall shine as stars hereafter in our crown of rejoicing.

Just at the close of Mr. Williams' ministry, in 1818, the first Sunday School known in this part of the country was started by Miss Catharine Campbell, in a room fitted up for the purpose on her father's premises. The school began with three teachers—Miss Catharine Campbell, (now Mrs. Wilbur of Orange,) Miss Eliza Campbell, and Miss Duyckinck, and with one hundred scholars. Miss Eliza taught forty of the larger boys, Miss Catharine twenty-five of the larger girls, and Miss Duyckinck took the remaining boys and girls. A few months later, the school more immediately connected with this church was organized by Mrs. Mary Ten Broeck, (now Mrs. Atwater of New Haven,) and a young lady, (now Mrs. Samuel Halsey of Newark.) It began with about five teachers and a hundred scholars. Neither school had any male teachers at the beginning. The good brethren wanted to see the innovation a success, before they lent it any assistance that would be likely to compromise their Christian standing.

Sunday Schools were then a new thing under the sun. A good many of the churches, and not a few of the pastors, regarded them suspiciously, as calculated to draw away the general interest from the long established means of grace and methods of salvation. The people also shared this want of confidence in them, or else were at a loss to know just what was intended by them. Some had the impression that it was a money-making operation. One woman—to whom one of the teachers went asking if her children could attend—wanted first to know “how much she was going to charge a quarter.” There were difficulties to overcome, but the schools were successfully established, and from the first were greatly prospered and blessed. They are not yet done bearing fruit.

Rev. James W. Tucker, who succeeded Mr. Williams, came here from New England. He was installed August 4th, 1818, and was here but a few months. He died suddenly February 11th, 1819. He is described as a man of remarkable pulpit ability, having few equals in his day in this respect. He was warmly in sympathy with the two infant Sunday Schools, and greatly endeared himself to the earnest workers of the church during his short stay among them.

Following him in 1820, was Rev. Elias W. Crane. He was installed January 5th, and preached here six years. He was dismissed October 17th, 1826. A large number were added to the church during his ministry. While here he preached the first historical sermon, but there is no copy of it to be found at present. It was during his time that a decided novelty, in the shape of a stove, was introduced into the church. Hitherto foot-stoves, heated with corn-cobs, and flat stones, well toasted and wrapped up, together with the warming power of the pulpit, and the inward heat of the spirit, had been relied upon. But the people were getting more tender, or fastidious, or both. There seems not to have been, however, as much opposition here to the ungodly thing, as in many other places. It came and took peaceable possession of the centre aisle about one-third of the way from the door. The pipe ran straight up toward the pulpit, to within a few feet of it, and then sent out two arms at right angles, that were thrust out through these side windows. As there were no chimneys, you can imagine the condition of the church on windy Sundays. The stove was paid for by voluntary contributions. An incident connected with this fact has been happily preserved, to illustrate the generous spirit of "those good old times,"

of which we delight to hear if it is not too frequently thrust upon our notice, as in sharp contrast with the more penurious spirit of the present age. One liberal-minded young man, when the contribution box was passed around, dropped twenty-five cents into it, and a near neighbor, witnessing his ruinous liberality, nudged him and inquired reprovingly, "What did you give so much for?"

During the last year of Mr. Crane's ministry, the people of the township met in this church to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the nation's independence, and to listen to an able and eloquent oration, delivered by Mr. Sylvester Cooke, then a young man and a teacher in the public school, now a venerable minister of the gospel retired from active work.

Rev. John D. Paxton followed Mr. Crane, and was here little less than a year. He was never installed. He was Moderator of the Session from October 27th, 1826, to June 25th, 1827.

Rev. William Gray was settled February 6th, 1828, and was here about a year. He left sometime in 1829.

In the Sessional records, as kept by these earlier pastors, I find that whenever there was a meeting of the Session, if one of the elders was absent he was called to an account at the next meeting, or even if he was late he must give his reasons. It was considered a matter of sacred duty in those days that every elder should be present at every meeting of the Session. It was a custom that might be practiced to advantage in our own day.

Rev. Horace Doolittle was installed in May, 1830, and dismissed in April, 1833.

The year he left, our Methodist brethren began the building of their house of worship. Up to this time our church

had been the only one anywhere in this vicinity. The churches at Westfield, Connecticut Farms and South Orange were our nearest neighbors. The Episcopal church at Millburn was not built until 1853, and the Baptist church at a still later period.

After Mr. Doolittle's time the church was without a pastor, except as supplied by Rev. Mr. Woodbury, until 1835. On April 28th of that year Rev. John C. Hart was installed, and remained eight years. He was dismissed Sept. 1st, 1843. Mr. Hart is remembered as an earnest preacher and most excellent pastor. There were large accessions to the church during the time of his ministry here. He preached a historical sermon July 1st, 1840, to which reference is made in the "Historical Collections of New Jersey." From his manuscript we learn of a thrilling incident that occurred during the battle of Springfield.

When the alarm was sounded upon the mountain a family living where Mrs. Daniel Smith is now living, began to hide away their more valuable household goods. While they were all thus busily engaged, the two armies were posted for the fight on either side of the Rahway river. They themselves were directly between the contending forces. They could not go down the road to cross at the bridge without exposing themselves to the fire of friend and foe. So they sought the shelter of the woods in the rear of the house, and becoming separated from each other one of the family, a young girl fourteen years old, found herself alone with a little sister in her care. Taking the baby in her arms she bravely forded the river while the battle was raging, and ran with it past the church on the road to Millburn, until she sank down exhausted. There the father

and mother soon found her, and they all continued their flight to a place of safety among the Short Hills.

Mr. Hart was succeeded by Rev. Edward E. Rankin, who was installed April 23d, 1844, and dismissed in 1850. He is spoken of as a man of fine personal appearance, having a clear pleasant voice, which, while it was not loud, was always easily heard. His ministry here was largely blessed. During his pastorate he took a trip to Europe, and Rev. Mr. Starkweather supplied the pulpit in his absence.

Rev. William E. Locke, formerly a preacher in the Baptist denomination, succeeded him. He was installed May 28th, 1851, and dismissed in 1852.

Of his successor, the Rev. O. L. Kirtland, who was installed May 3d, 1853, and dismissed at his own request, on account of failing health, April 17th, 1872, it is not necessary that I should speak, even to the children, of this congregation. It is not to be expected that the words of one who was a stranger to him, can make any more dear or fragrant that name of blessed memory to you all. How many hallowed associations are clustered around it in your hearts and homes. He is the man who, for twenty years, was your sympathizing friend and spiritual adviser. In the very nature of the case no other can ever take his place, to many of you. He married you, he baptized your children, he stood with you at the grave of your loved ones, he sought to soften the sorrow by words of holy comfort; he has been in your homes a frequent and honored guest; his memory is associated with days that were bright and days that were cloudy; he has been to you father, and brother, and friend; and such friendships are formed but once in a life-time. There were one hundred and fifty-eight added to the church during Mr. Kirtland's pastorate here. In the early part of his

ministry the lecture room was built, and near the close of it the church was remodeled to its present appearance and the organ put in its place. Two years after his resignation he fell asleep in Jesus.

On the 24th of October, 1872, Rev. Mr. Bowen was installed pastor of the church, and dismissed in April, 1874, to enter upon the Turkish Mission, where he now is.

The present pastor was called and began the supply of the pulpit in May, 1874, and was installed October 28th, of the same year.

During the past year an infant class room has been built upon the lecture room, and the lecture room repainted, at an expense of about eight hundred dollars. The church has had, since its beginning, fifteen pastors. Of the men who have served you in the Gospel ministry, several took this as their first charge and were ordained here. One was married here; two died and were buried here. From the membership of the church, three young men—Alfred Briant, William Townley and William D. Reeve—have entered the ministry. One young lady has gone out as a foreign missionary—Miss Rebekah Smith, who went as the wife of Rev. Mr. Forbes, to one of the Sandwich Islands. Thus have we endeavored to give, as concisely as possible, but faithfully as to facts and dates, the history of this church.

And now we are near the end of the story. How swiftly do we pass over in thought the uneven path that the generations have toiled along so wearily. How lightly do we pass by and leave behind us the rough furlongs, where the feet of the travelers have stumbled and fallen. And in truth we should add, how superficially at the best, do we write and read.

The undercurrent of thought and passion, that sends

to the surface the occasional event from which our fragmentary and imperfect records are made up, is reserved for the All-seeing Eye alone. Every being and organization has a history that only the Judgment Day will disclose. We may not know what that history of this church is, but we believe that when it is completed and unfolded it will, with all the attendant circumstances that have come under human observation, bear unimpeachable testimony to the goodness and merey of our God. He has been faithful to the fatherless and the widow. He has been careful of the interests of his children, temporal and spiritual. He has answered the penitent's prayer, and wiped away the mourner's tear. He has given his angels charge concerning this little flock through all their earthly pilgrimage. His messengers have tented within these walls, and heads that were pillowed on stone have found it the gate of heaven.

"The days of the years of my pilgrimage," says the old church, "are an hundred and thirty years." I have seen the forefathers laid in their graves; I have seen the children and the grandchildren grow up and pass away; I have seen this country when it was but thirteen small and dependent colonies; I have seen them develop into a united and powerful nationality. I have seen this village enlarging its boundaries and multiplying its industries. I have seen churches of other denominations springing up around me; I have heard the individual, and church, and state, calling upon the Universal Father and making known their necessities, and never have I known the faintest cry to be disregarded. "Once I was young and now I am old, yet *never* have I seen the *righteous forsaken*."

And now, brethren, we must not forget at any time that we hold a place in the long column of generations that keeps

steadily on in the march of ages. We must not forget that the fore ranks have fallen, and that we are the vanguard to-day fronting the grave. The night is far spent, and the dawn—whose radiant glory tinges at last the mountain peaks of faith and hope—finds us in the place of honor on the field of conflict. We have nothing to do with the past but to gather from it the lessons of experience, to serve us in the present. The ages gone belonged to the generations that peopled them; the age in which we live belongs to us, and all its duties and responsibilities are ours. And if ever there was a time in the history of the world when the call was urgent to the people of GOD to come up to the help of the Lord, that time is the present. The forces of evil are marshaling for the closing struggle. Modern scepticism is loud mouthed and defiant. Roman Catholicism is desperate in its death throes. Anti-Christ is at flood-tide, and all the springs of wordliness are swelling its current. Come up, O men and women of faith and prayer; come up with willing hands and sympathetic hearts, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. And you, slow of heart and slower of hand, unwilling to do your part yet bearing the name of Christ, if you hear not the trumpet call of the Spirit that is sounding through the land to-day, I pray you for the love of GOD separate yourselves from his people, and go to your own place, that the world may know you for what you are, and the Church of Christ may escape the reproach.

“ Far down the ages now,
Much of her journey done;
The pilgrim church pursues her way,
Until her crown be won.

No wider is the gate,
No broader is the way;
No smoother is the ancient path,
That leads to life and day.

No slacker grows the fight,
No feebler is the foe,
Nor less the need of armor tried,
Of shield, and spear, and bow.

Still faithful to our God,
And to our captain true;
We follow where He leads the way,
The kingdom in our view."

Let us be faithful, brethren, in our day, and our influence will be felt, and our memory fragrant, in the years to come. This church has a glorious record; let us so live and labor that its course shall still be from glory to glory.

GOD BLESS THE OLD CHURCH FOREVERMORE!

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries



1 1012 01191 9505

